

EVALUATION OF THE DURHAM POLICE DEPARTMENT'S S.T.A.R.S. NOTIFICATION PROGRAM

Original Report Prepared by M. J. Gathings and J. M. Frabutt, August 2005

Updated Reported Prepared by Dan Sellers and Kristen DiLuca, July 2009

**Center for Youth, Family, and Community Partnerships
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
July 2009**

The Center for Youth, Family, and Community Partnerships at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro is the Project Safe Neighborhoods Research Partner for the United States Attorney's Office, Middle District of North Carolina. These efforts are supported by Project Safe Neighborhoods funding through the North Carolina Governor's Crime Commission. For additional information about this report, please contact Asst. Director Kristen DiLuca, MA, at 330 S. Greene St, Suite 200, Greensboro, NC 27401 (336-217-9735) or by email: kdiluca@uncg.edu.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes an evaluation of the Durham S.T.A.R.S. Notification Program. Based upon data for 94 offenders that participated in notification sessions from March 2005 to June 2006, this report examines changes in participants' rate of offending by category prior to and following their notification. Based on the findings reviewed here, it appears this program has a positive impact on the reduction of violent, drug, and weapon related offenses committed by participants notified in the City of Durham.

Specifically, analyses indicated the following key findings:

- The **rate of violent offenses per month decreased by 47%** after notification.
- The **rate of drug offenses per month decreased by 40%** after notification.
- The **rate of firearm offenses per month decreased by 57%** after notification.

The Notification Program: A Law Enforcement-Community Partnership to Reduce Violent Crime

The S.T.A.R.S. (Strategies To Abate and Reduce Senseless Violence) Notification Program is a component of the Durham Police Department's strategic approach to reducing gun violence and violent crime in the community as a key component of Durham's Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative. Through this program, repeat violent offenders are identified and selected for a face to face intervention meeting that allows law enforcement officials and community representatives to deliver a unified message that violence will no longer be tolerated in the community.

The law enforcement component of this forum educates offenders about the consequences of continued violent behavior. This notification, in effect, draws a line in the sand and explains in plain language to chronic offenders the ground rules for expected behavior and the consequences of non-compliance. They are specifically told what behaviors need to be changed: violent activity, the use/possession of firearms/weapons, and participating in group criminal activity such as narcotics distribution.

Representatives from numerous local, state, and federal agencies deliver the message (e. g., Durham Police Department, United States Attorney, the State Bureau of Investigation, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, and Department of Community Corrections, and law enforcement representatives from PSN sites across the Middle District of NC). Offenders are notified of potential penalties under state and federal law, and those who re-offend after attending the notification session are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. To add further gravity to the process, offenders are provided with a list of prior attendees who continued criminal behavior and were thus prosecuted accordingly.

Community representatives are present as part of the team, offering support and resources to offenders wishing to make a change in their lifestyle. The community component of the notification process features representatives from local churches and service-providing organizations. These individuals volunteer their time in order to come together and deliver a uniform message to participants that they too will no longer tolerate violence in the community. Additionally, and in difference to the law enforcement message, community representatives offer a message of warmth and reception to offenders. This component is designed to support offenders' re-entry into the community by offering linkages to needed resources such as employment, housing, job training, substance abuse treatment, or counseling.

Data Entry

The Durham Police Department (DPD) provided the raw data for these analyses. Cynthia McCollough, S.T.A.R.S. Case Manager for DPD, compiled a list that contained offender demographics and call-in sessions attended. The Center for Youth, Family, and Community Partnerships (CYFCP) was also provided a complete set of NC Criminal Histories for all the notified offenders. From these reports, CYFCP was able to sort through the information and code the data appropriately for analysis.

Data were entered into statistical analysis software (SPSS) during the summer of 2009 at the CYFCP offices in Greensboro, NC. District Court charges were counted for each offender derived from that individual's case history. Entries in the current database span the six notification sessions that were held between **March 3, 2005** and **June 22, 2006**. No offenses committed after the dates in which the histories were retrieved are included in the following analyses. Additionally, criminal histories provided include only offenses committed within the State of North Carolina, thus offenses committed outside of the state are not included.

Demographics of the Sample

Offenders with information provided by DPD = 94

- Race breakdown of offenders:

African American = 92 (97.9%)

Caucasian = 1 (1.1%)

Hispanic = 1 (1.1%)

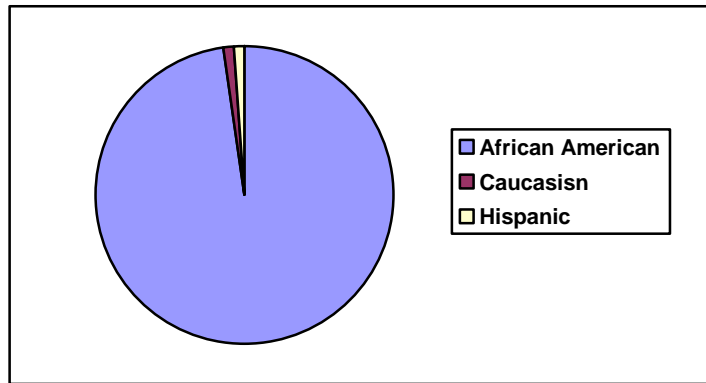


Figure 1.

- Sex breakdown of offenders:

Male = 93 (98.9%)

Female = 1 (1.1%)

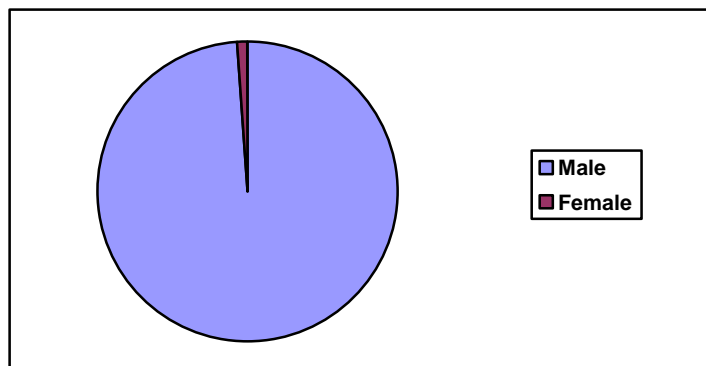


Figure 2.

Descriptive Statistics

The average number of charges in District Court for violent offenses prior to notification was 3.9. However, the total cases for each offender varied greatly, ranging from several individuals with no violent charges to 15 charges. Overall, 77.7% of offenders had 5 or fewer cases, 15.9% had between 5 and 11 cases, and 6.4% had 12 to 15 cases.

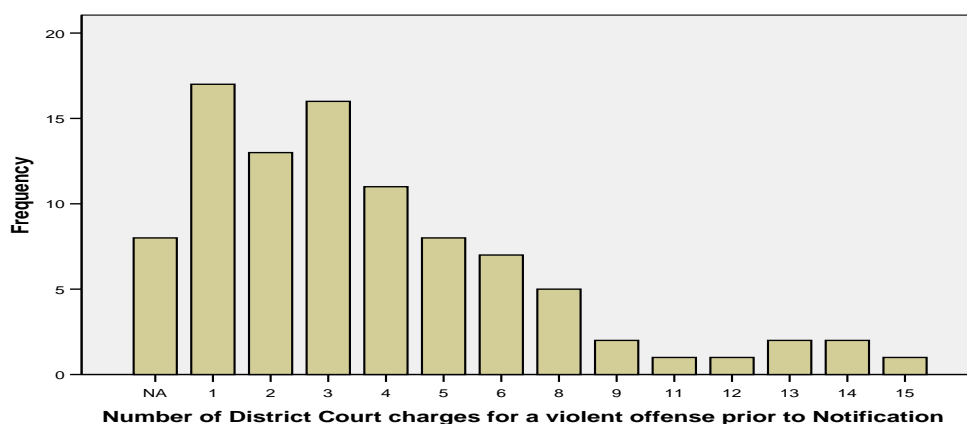


Figure 3.

The following section on Data Preparation explains how this difference was handled in order to place before and after measures on a common scale.

Data Preparation

As noted above, individuals had offense histories that were greatly varied. That is, several offenders had offenses dating back several decades, whereas others had only committed a first offense within the last few years. Therefore, in order to examine changes in offending before and after notification, it was necessary to create a ratio for each offender that took into account the amount of time before and after notification. Accordingly, a ratio was calculated for each subject based on (1) the number of District Court charges an offender had for a violent, drug, or firearms offenses, and (2) the number of offenses, each of which is then divided by time (in months). For example, if an individual had 6 court cases before notification, with the first case occurring in March of 2001, and was notified in March of 2003, the ratio would be calculated as follows: $(6 \text{ cases}) \div (24 \text{ months}) = .25 \text{ cases per month}$. At that rate, a case is occurring about once every four months. These ratios, calculated for each individual both before and after notification, serve as the basis for analyzing the evaluation questions below.

Evaluation Questions

1. Are there differences in the rate of violent offending, as indicated by charges in the District Court system, before notification compared to after notification?

Before Notification: 0.064 encounters per month

After Notification: 0.034 encounters per month

The overall ratio for violent charges in District Court **decreased by 47%**.

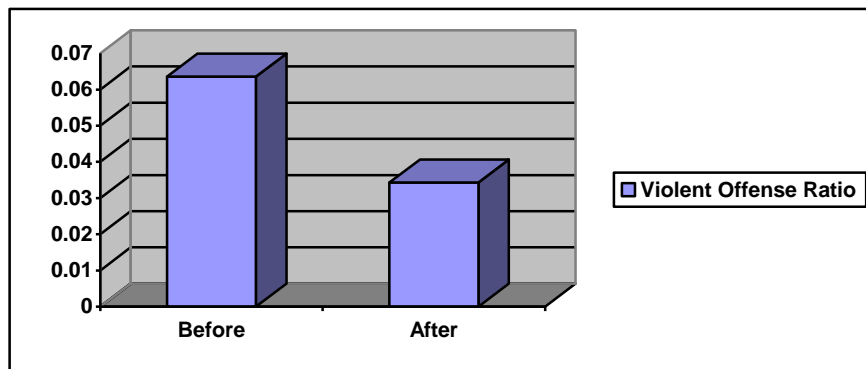


Figure 4.

According to a Sample T-test, the findings are statistically significant.

2. Are there differences in the rate of drug offending, as indicated by charges in the District Court system, before notification compared to after notification?

Before Notification: 0.098 encounters per month

After Notification: 0.059 encounters per month

The overall ratio for drug charges in District Court **decreased by 40%**.

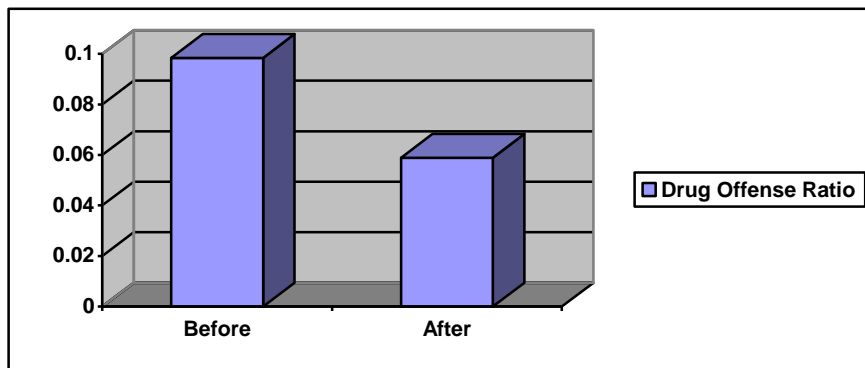


Figure 5.

According to a Sample T-test, the findings are statistically significant.

3. Are there differences in the rate of firearm offending, as indicated by charges in the District Court system, before notification compared to after notification?

Before Notification: 0.044 encounters per month

After Notification: 0.019 encounters per month

The overall ratio for firearm charges in District Court **decreased by 57%**.

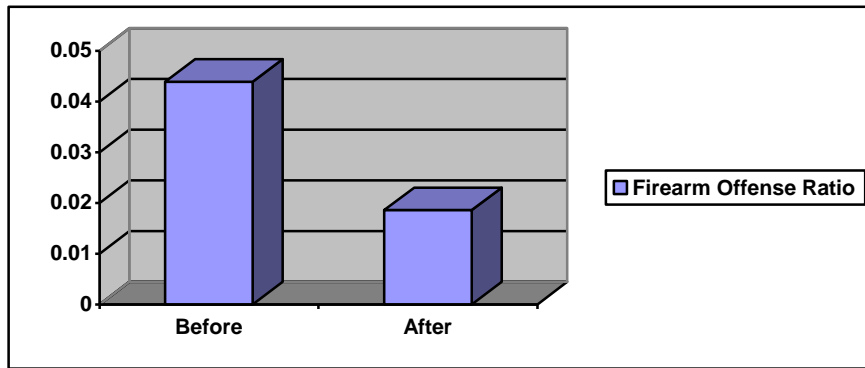


Figure 6.

According to a Sample T-test, the findings are statistically significant.

Summary

The purpose of this report was to review the most recent criminal history data in order to examine the efficacy of the Durham Police Department's S.T.A.R.S. Notification Program. Based upon the findings reviewed here, it appears that this program continues to be an effective method for reducing violent crime committed by notified offenders in the City of Durham.

Specifically, analyses showed that the number of District Court charges for violent offenses committed by notified offenders decreased after notification by 47%. District Court charges for drug-related offenses committed by notified offenders decreased after notification by 40%. District Court charges for firearm-related offenses committed by notified offenders decreased after notification by 57%.

Acknowledgment:

- The authors thank the Durham Police Department and Cynthia McCollough, S.T.A.R.S. Case Manager, in particular, for maintaining the notification records, compiling the case histories and providing for our access to those data.